A Healthy Cybersecurity Investment: Regional Cancer Centre Stays Protected With Sophos

Customer-at-a-Glance

The Regional Cancer Centre (RCC), Thiruvananthapuram, is an emerging global leader in cancer control and care. It is one of the 28 centers operated under the National Cancer Control Programme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, India.

The state-owned hospital is renowned for the premium, yet affordable, services it provides to patients. It is the first government-owned cancer institute in the country to have won the coveted NABH (National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers) accreditation.

Website
www.rcctvm.gov.in

Industry
Healthcare

Number of users
1,000

Challenges
‣ Hospital priority: providing affordable access to superior cancer care
‣ Limited availability of funds for the IT team
‣ Prioritize security of extremely sensitive data
‣ Concurrent usage by 1,000 employees
‣ History of compromised servers

Sophos Solutions
XG Firewall 450 x High Availability
Intercept X Advanced
Sophos Mobile

Established in 1981, RCC is an autonomous scientific institution jointly sponsored by the Government of Kerala and the Government of India. It has been designated as a Science and Technology Centre by the Government of Kerala under the health sector.

RCC is renowned for its evolved policies and priorities to provide oncology facilities to the less privileged in the community like children and less affluent members by giving free chemotherapy and advanced diagnostic facilities such as CT scans and isotope scanning. Nearly 60% patients receive free treatment and another 29% who fall in the middle income group receive treatment at subsidized rates. Free chemotherapy is given to all children irrespective of family income. Adults with curable cancers also receive free treatment. During the last five years, drugs worth INR 8,000,000 have been supplied free of cost to the low income group. Every year nearly 16,000 new patients visit the centre from South India and neighboring countries.

Why would a healthcare provider need a security solution?

With more than 1,200 employees, RCC was heavily dependent on IT for internet, intranet, and web applications. Being a government-funded hospital seeking to provide world-class cancer care at affordable prices, RCC had a problem. Resources allocated towards IT and security were minimal as the major portion of funds was required to further cancer research and provide critical care to patients. However, the hospital was facing frequent virus attacks. RCC therefore needed a solution, which, while being top-notch in terms of security, would still fall within the limits of its budget.

According to Shaji Jesudas, systems analyst, Regional Cancer Centre, "On any given day, we have a footfall of more than 1,600 outpatients. To manage these patients, we have at least 1,000 employees concurrently using our web server. This not only puts pressure on the performance of the server, but also increases our exposure to cyber threats. We needed a responsive solution to tackle the situation."

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Data privacy was another source of concern as the hospital often dealt with sensitive information, making it an attractive target for cybercriminals looking to access and sell that sensitive information. In fact, RCC had fallen victim to a virus attack that brought down its web server for an entire day; its domain has been blocked and the hospital website hacked.

"Any downtime directly impacts the quality of services we promise to our patients, so it became imperative to find a robust and cost-effective solution," says Jesudas.

What made Sophos the final word in network protection?

"After our successful introduction to Sophos via Cyberoam, we decided to migrate to the XG Firewall 430 for its advanced next-gen technology," says Jesudas. "We were slightly concerned about downtime, but we need not have worried as the migration was seamless. The team did an amazing job training our staff and helping us transition smoothly."

Currently, the company uses the XG Firewall with Intercept X Advanced 850 model for endpoint protection. It also uses Sophos Mobile, a unified endpoint management solution, to help manage and secure employees on the go.

With Sophos Synchronized Security, RCC's endpoint and network security solutions talk to each other. The Security Heartbeat pulses continuous, real-time information about suspicious behavior between the endpoints and the network firewall. If malware is detected on the endpoint or suspicious traffic is identified by the firewall, the information is shared via the Heartbeat and remediation takes place immediately to mitigate risk and prevent data loss.

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Will a good network solution really make a difference to a hospital?

Besides protecting sensitive information, one of the biggest benefits has been the ease with which RCC has been able to deploy the solution. Unlike standalone solutions that work in siloes, an integrated solution comes with multiple benefits in one box. This meant that IT staff didn't need to manually correlate the data, which removed the need for downtime for hospital staff. They could continue to deliver vital cancer treatment to their patients.

Jesudas notes: "With different team members working on disparate issues, it becomes virtually impossible to connect the dots and realize that a threat is underway. Sophos not only connects the dots for us, but also saves us 60 man hours a month, which was previously spent on detection and remediation of threats. And it is more cost effective than several standalone cybersecurity solutions."

As XG Firewall is fully customizable, RCC has set up its own rules. Devices are managed through the web console and no technical expertise is required for a new user to be up and running quickly. This makes it extremely easy for new users to be onboarded via their own devices and access the required RCC systems quickly and securely.

"We also get a large population of medical students who research with us for brief periods. They bring their own devices and we need to give them access to our knowledge base while not compromising on security. With Sophos, all the set-up can be completed in just a few minutes," concludes Jesudas.

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